budget their money and manage cash flow, while maintaining some control over how the money is spent. Initially, the limits on the types of purchases may be employed as guidance with respect to the appropriateness of purchases, and to discipline the dependent to control their spending habits.

[0035] Other features of the present invention will be pointed out in the following description and claims, which disclose the principles of the present invention and the best modes which are presently contemplated for carrying them out.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0036] FIG. **1** is a block diagram of the representative system hardware of the present invention; and

[0037] FIG. **2** is a flow chart showing the operation of the system of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0038] Referring now to the drawings, and initially FIG. **1**, the system of the present invention is comprised of a computer processor **12**, herein referred to as a controller processor, coupled to a data storage device **14** such as a memory device and in communication through phone line **15** with at least one input device **16** through which fund transfer command instructions are received and through phone line **17** with at least one output device **18** through which electronic fund transfers are executed. The embodiment depicted in FIG. **1** also includes output device **20** for generating a file record containing information on electronic fund transfer payees, which is described in greater detail hereinafter.

[0039] The system may be a local, entirely self-contained internal network of input and output devices under the absolute control of the system operator, as would be the case when the system is employed by a casino or an amusement park. Alternatively, the system may be in communication with an external network of input and output devices, such as a banking, credit or ATM network, or the internet.

[0040] The controller processor of the present invention can be essentially any mainframe computer processor or plurality of processors, or any computer workstation capable of interfacing with the network to be employed and executing the volume of command instructions supplied by the network. The control programs to be run by the controller processor for operating the system of the present invention are essentially conventional, once the objectives of the present invention are described.

[0041] The data storage devices associated with the controller processor can be essentially any conventional memory storage device, typically a semi-conductor memory in combination with a hard disk drive or a CD-ROM drive with a compact disk. The memory device is employed to store information on the preestablished accounts from which account holders transfer funds to third party recipients. It will be assumed for purposes of the present invention that the system operators have methods of establishing accounts and placing money or establishing credit lines within these accounts and that proper accounting procedures are in place to track the various transactions, all of which are standard in the industry and well known to those skilled in the art.

[0042] For local self-contained systems, the controller processor is in communication with the internal network of input and output devices through cables or telecommunication lines. When the system is in communication with an external network, telecommunication lines are nearly exclusively employed. Telecommunication lines are defined as including wireless communications.

[0043] Essentially any input device capable of supplying command instructions to the controller processor from account holders and third party recipients is suitable for use as an input device for the present invention. For purposes of the present invention command instructions will be considered to be issued by an account holder or a third party recipient if the instructions are issued by another individual on their behalf. For example, a bank employee may issue command instructions requested by an account holder to transfer funds for access by the third party recipient. A store employee may issue command instructions requested by the third party recipient to obtain an electronic fund transfer to pay for goods and services in a point-of-sale purchase.

[0044] External banking, credit and ATM networks have already been established using as combination input/output devices stations that employ magnetic card readers in combination with manual input devices such as keypads, touch screens and the like, through which information required for the transaction may be entered, such as the transaction amount, account password, and so forth. One example of such a station is an ATM. Another example is the magnetic card reader/keypad employed for point-of-sale transactions to obtain bank approval of credit card and debit card transactions. Such stations also serve as output devices for the systems that they serve. The ATM is adapted to deliver cash, print a receipt and relay messages from the network processor via a CRT. The magnetic card reader relays messages from the network processor via an LCD, and is also adapted to print a receipt. When the system of the present invention is adapted to communicate with such an external network, the fund transfer command instructions may be issued by the third party recipients through such input devices, which will also function as output devices for the system, delivering cash, relaying messages from the controller processor and printing receipts.

[0045] Otherwise, essentially any conventional manual input device may be employed, particularly with local, internally self-contained systems in accordance with the present invention or with systems operated over the internet. Such devices include keypads, touch screens, mouse and cursor systems, and the like. It is not essential that magnetically encoded cards and magnetic card readers be employed.

[0046] Likewise, any device capable of relaying messages from the controller processor to the account holder or third party recipient is also suitable for use as an output device with systems of the present invention. Examples of devices include CRT's, LCD's, printers, and the like. In the simplest of local, internally self-contained systems, the machine vending of cash and printing of receipts is not contemplated. Instead, an employee of the system operator would attend to such tasks, receiving prompts from the controller processor through an output display device.

[0047] A particular advantage of the present invention is that the account holder is provided with a periodic account-